

self-abnegation, docility, and forbearance can be expressions of sin' (p. xiii). We have been enough aware, he suggests, of sins of lust and pride and, contrariwise, too little concerned with sins of sloth. Professor Cox is right. We have all had our lifetime's fill of newspaper reports of what one cleric or another has to say about contraception and masturbation, and of pulpit denunciations of arrogance and opinion. Ordinary folk don't pay much attention to dull mouthing of that sort. The common Christian question is not 'What does the Church say?' but 'What is the Church doing?'. We have found new heroes: Dorothy Day among the poor, Camilo Torres among the guerillas, and even Dietrich Bonhoeffer among the conspirators. It is probable that the success of the cinematograph version of Thomas More's history is attributable not to any great public sympathy with the Papal Claims but to the winningness of a single man fighting a tyrannical bureaucracy in the manner of an earlier-day Kafka. And those who wonder why so evidently holy a man as Newman has even now something less than popular acclaim might ask themselves if this has not something to do with their devout emphasis on his docility before lawful superiors and their disguising of his revolutionary temper.

It is, however, a trifle old-fashioned to consider the Christian life in terms of any hero. Professor Cox recognizes that the distinctive characteristic of the modern Christian must be a readiness to take seriously his own job to be himself a saint, and to take seriously his human sharing in the city. His book is an effort to make more Christians aware of the open future and their true responsibility for the shape of the future.

Professor Cox's analysis of our present condition has its bases in scriptural exegesis.

His account of 'the most exciting chapter in the history of religion' (p. 41), demonstrates the nature of the clash between Canaanite fertility cults and Hebrew prophetism. He shows, as have so many commentators on this period, that the Hebrews were struggling to maintain human freedom and human responsibility for the future against the Canaanite agricultural determinism which left no room at all for human endeavour. The victory of the prophetic element 'assures the survival of a perspective on the future without which both planning and politics would seem futile' (p. 42).

The theologian's present task is to continue the prophetic work. He is to announce a message of hope which frees men from fear of apocalyptic destruction or teleological determinism in order that they may have courage for the coming Day of the Lord.

We have to free ourselves from 'ecclesiastical bias', which leads us to suppose that politics can be only a secondary interest, 'a prejudice which comports well with Richard Hooker, but misses any connexion with Amos' (p. 16), and from 'existentialist bias' which fades the world, society, history and the revolution 'into secondary significance as the isolated Ego reacts to the disembodied Word', (p. 17).

We have each to take his stand in the city, 'where man becomes man', and there to recognize Jesus' demand for participation in 'today's social revolution' (p. 20). We must not 'fritter away our destiny by letting some snake tell us what to do' (p. xiv), rather we must, as responsible men, accept that 'to follow Jesus means to be on the move, to abandon old formulations when they no longer serve, to address new issues as they appear.'

This seems to me a wise book. It certainly has the right tone. HAMISH F. G. SWANSTON

CLERICAL CELIBACY UNDER FIRE, by E. Schillebeeckx, O.P. *Sheed and Ward*, London, 1968. 150 pp. 14s.

CELIBACY: THE NECESSARY OPTION, edited by George H. Frein. *Herder and Herder*, New York, 1968. 176 pp. 34.95.

That there is still a good deal of muddled thinking going on about the burning question of clerical celibacy seems to me to be very well symbolized by the photograph with which the publishers have seen fit to adorn the cover of Fr Schillebeeckx's little book. It shows a couple of white-clad, shaven-headed monks bowing low over the psalters in choir. Exactly what relevance it has to the subject under discussion, there is, unfortunately, neither

caption nor blurb to tell us. But it does, at least, serve to indicate that there are still intelligent people around who have not yet quite grasped what the controversy is about. Celibacy, the implication seems to be, is 'something to do with monks'—and about as relevant.

Fr Schillebeeckx, however, does not see the matter in this way. For him, celibacy is something that is of vital concern to all

Christians, whether or not they are called upon to practise it. It is, he says, 'the religious experience of the overpowering might of the grace of God's kingdom', which, for some people, becomes 'a condition which makes entrance into marriage impossible'. But, since it is essentially a charism, it can only be accepted in freedom. It can never be imposed either directly or indirectly. The Christian ministry, too, is a charism and it contains within itself a positive invitation to celibacy. But it does not necessarily demand it of each individual.

For Fr Schillebeeckx, the immediate cause of the present crisis lies in the fact that we have never got this straight. Western theology is still discussing whether or not there is a promise of celibacy involved in the acceptance of holy orders. This has led to a certain ambiguity which tends to give rise to the idea that celibacy is just something that 'goes along' with ordination, an idea that is fostered by the formulation of the existing law of celibacy. As long as this law remains in force, he can see no remedy except in a complete re-structuring of the formation of candidates for the priesthood, in which stress would be laid on the charismatic significance of celibacy and on the psychosocial and emotional integration which ought to make it psychologically possible. But this, he sees, is only a partial and temporary solution, and he goes on to suggest that, in the present situation of the world and the Church, it would make sense to admit married persons not only to the diaconate, as is already being done, but also to the priesthood. This has already been done in a few cases, and there are good grounds for thinking that the practice will become more and more widespread.

But when he comes to deal with the question of removing the obligation of celibacy for candidates to the priesthood, Fr Schillebeeckx is a good deal more cautious. He feels that, at present, discussion of the problem tends to be too highly charged with emotion to make valid conclusions possible. He would like to see the question subjected to expert study in all its aspects. But this will inevitably take time, and we are left meanwhile with the anguished problem of those who find themselves unable to bear the burden of what they have undertaken. It is urgently necessary to find for them an honourable and dignified way out.

Alongside the insights of Fr Schillebeeckx, much of *Celibacy: A Necessary Option* tends to sound a bit superficial. It is frankly a plea, ones

might also say, a demand, for the abolition of the law of celibacy. A collection of papers of this kind always presents the reviewer with a problem because he may all too easily seem to be tarring all the contributors with the same brush. In the present case, however, apart from the witty and commonsense paper of J. V. Langmead Casserley which stands in a class of its own, a fairly clear-cut distinction can be made between those dealing with the scriptural and theological aspects of the question and those dealing with its sociological and psychological aspects.

The latter are workmanlike and useful. But the former, while covering much the same ground as Fr Schillebeeckx, do not work at anything like his depth. He is trying to get to the root of the matter. They are pleading a cause. For him, the Christian ministry contains within itself a positive invitation to celibacy. For them, 'the vocation to the priesthood and the vocation to celibacy are not the same, although the Church still markets them as a package deal'. He lays the emphasis on celibacy as a 'religious experience of the overpowering might of the grace of God's kingdom'. They lay it on the 'inalienable right of priests as free men to marriage and procreation'. In the end, however, both sides arrive at conclusions which are not very dissimilar, and a sympathetic reader will not have much difficulty in synthesizing these, nor, broadly speaking, in assenting to them.

He will, however, probably be left doubting if they have really provided the answer to the present *malaise*. Fr Schillebeeckx would, no doubt, disclaim any intention of trying to do so. But some, at least, of the contributors to the Herder symposium give the impression that they regard optional celibacy as a panacea. Yet, surely, as Marc Oraison recently suggested so forcibly in *Le Monde*, the problem goes far deeper. It is the whole 'system' that is being questioned; and the hard fact is that neither a deepening of understanding of celibacy 'for the sake of the kingdom of God', nor a reform of seminary education, nor even the possibility of marriage and family life are going to contribute to a long-term solution unless the system within which the diocesan priest is expected to live and work is drastically overhauled. Such an overhaul will involve a profound change in diocesan and parochial structures, in relationships between bishop and priest, priest and people. It will require courageous experimentation with new forms of ministry:

group ministries, priest-workers, auxiliary priests and deacons. It will require a massive handing over to the laity of non-ministerial functions in the Church. Within such a context, it is not fanciful to foresee the emergence of a

married clergy working alongside and on equal terms with their fellow-priests who have chosen a celibate ministry. But nothing short of this will get to the root of the trouble.

J. R. WICKSTEED, O.C.R.

THE FREEDOM OF SEXUAL LOVE, A Christian Concept of Sexuality in Marriage, by Joseph and Lois Bird. Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1968. 189 pp. 25s.

Part of the tragedy of many couples who seek marriage advisory counselling is that they do not know how to love and are in danger of producing children who will perpetuate this vicious circle. If they have never witnessed love they will almost certainly fail in love themselves. The problem, then, is how to help them to break this circle. This book may help many, for it tries to integrate detailed sex instruction and psychological insight into Christian love. As such the book represents their own personal love story, and it is the only book I know which conveys such information in this way; they offer it with great humility, as an act of witness, hoping that it may give freedom and joy to others not so fortunate. They have succeeded. Though in one sense it is a pity that such an intimate book should have to be written, it is clearly necessary.

Their vision is the antithesis of Henry Vaughan's poem *Retreat*: they move *forward* to the goal of complete love, and they are honest enough to acknowledge the many difficulties on the way. The very perfection described, however, suggests the first of several reserves about this book: it could discourage all but the luckiest and best-endowed.

Even good love has its deserts and downs. And somewhere between the extremes of resorting to a psychologist and hiding, curled up, prickles uplifted like a hedgehog, lies the vast field of examination of conscience. It is there that we can find out so much about ourselves and discover reasons for certain behaviour. Unhidden problems may be manageable. Serious problems need professional help. The authors insist on the importance of communication; some may disagree and prefer the deep peace which comes from silent awareness. And one's silent conversations with God may sound pixilated to others if put into words, rather as some of the authors' own confidences may seem to be so for some of their readers—as, for instance, this: 'Pregnancy is a nine months' extension of the orgasm.'

Then, since sex is part of love, and marriage is a commitment to love, there are areas of love unexplored by the authors, possibly

because they have not lived through them yet. For sex has its seasons—spring sex, summer sex, autumn sex, winter sex, each with its own moods and colours. It is of the last two periods that one could learn more. The sometimes foggy days of the menopause. The upheaval of retirement and retrenchment, learning for the first time what it is like to live together all day and every day, the wife losing some of her privacy and the husband and possibly the wife parted from their life-work and outside environment. A geriatrician will say that here is where one can meet the unloving and the unloved, the lonely and deserted, or the elderly relations tearing apart a younger generation's marriage. Modern medicine is prolonging old age, and yet few people prepare for it emotionally. It is the ultimate revelation and test of unselfish love, humility and charity. What so often happens is that people become petulant and demanding, and indulge in emotional blackmail, they feel useless and unhappy and become nothing but a burden in a rather unsympathetic world. It need not be so.

What is also missing is a reflection on the part friends play in sex and love throughout marriage—and friends should here include the children. Although the authors have nine of their own, they are mentioned only in the dedication as a means through which their oneness has grown. But children and friends are not just means for the growth of love on the part of the parents; they have to be loved for their own sakes, and children have to be gradually released to become adults—it is like releasing a kite delicately to the changing and risky winds.

Finally, there is a lack of laughter and fun in the book. Eutrapelia is the yeast and whipped egg-white of love, the agents which sustain and give lightness to marriage. They must be nursed as gently as a soufflé or kneaded as diligently as dough. As Ogden Nash wrote:

One would be in less danger
From the wiles of the stranger
If one's kin and kith
Were more fun to be with.

The book is therefore original, courageous